



Crime and Punishment

Oaksey

Court Case

Sir Geoffrey Lawrence

The Hon Sir Geoffrey Lawrence, a judge of the High Court, of Hill Farm, Oaksey, Wilts, was, at Cirencester Court on Wednesday, fined £25 for a contravention of the Milk (Maximum Prices) Order by selling milk at an excessive price, and £5 for a contravention of the Milk and Dairies Order by causing bottles of milk to be filled other than on registered premises.

He was also ordered to pay five guineas advocate's fee.

On two summonses of aiding and abetting in the offences, Irene Emery, a land girl employed at Hill Farm, was fined £1 on each charge.

Mr R J Parker (Swindon) prosecuted on behalf of the Ministry of Food and the Cirencester Rural District Council. Mr Harold Dale (Wootton Bassett) appeared for the defence, and entered a plea of "guilty" on all charges.

Mr Parker said the cases arose out of observations kept by Mr R N Hughes, sanitary inspector to the Cirencester RDC, who on April 26, saw a van, marked Hill Farm Dairy, call at the Gloucestershire Dairy Company's premises at Ashcroft, Cirencester. He followed the van and saw milk being delivered from it in parts of Cirencester rural area.

Later at Coates, Mr Hughes saw Miss Emery filling milk out of a ten-gallon churn. In reply to his questions, she said that she knew it was an offence to fill bottles in the street, but she was only carrying out instructions.

These instructions were given by Sir Geoffrey's bailiff.

Mr Hughes bought a bottle of the milk, for which Miss Emery charged him 10d per quart.

Mr Parker said it had been the practice of the authorities to prosecute not only the person who had committed the offence, but also the person on whose behalf it had been committed, and that practice was maintained in this case, where the owner of the dairy concerned happened to be a Lord Justice of Appeal.

Mr Dale, for the defence, said that as soon as Sir Geoffrey had satisfied himself that breaches of the regulations had been committed, he instructed him (Mr Dale) that he wished to plead guilty, and wanted in no way to evade any responsibility.

Sir Geoffrey was himself away from Oaksey for months at a time, and had to leave the management of the farm to his bailiff, who was a competent man, having been there for 20 years.

The whole difficulty in these cases arose because of the efforts that were made to continue this large milk round in difficult wartime circumstances. When Sir Geoffrey wanted to give up this round, he was persuaded by people to continue it for the sake of the public.

Then there was an extra burden in the form of a large number of cheap or free milk customers. The employees struggled on in maintaining the round, but when early this year the milk ration was increased, it caught the bailiff just at a time when he was waiting for some cows to come into milk. In order to bridge over that difficulty the bailiff arranged for TT milk to be bought from the Gloucestershire Dairy, and Miss Emery was given clean bottles to use when such occasion arose.

After the Bench had retired for consultation, the Chairman (Capt F Fawcett) said that the magistrates realised that Sir Geoffrey had no knowledge of what was going on, but the observance of the regulations had to be safeguarded. Sir Geoffrey would be fined £25 on the first charge, and ordered to pay five guineas advocate's fee and £5 on the second charge. Emery would be fined £1 on each of the two charges of aiding and abetting.

Gloucester Echo Thursday 31 August 1944